



Ecosystem Protections: Species and Habitat Working Group

Work Plan

Issue: Ecosystem Protections: Species and Habitat

Objective: *To define the future role of the Sanctuary in managing marine resources.*

Description:

This working group will be formed to consider the future mission of the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (HIHWNMS) with regard to ecosystem protection.

The past and current mission of the HIHWNMS has been to protect a single species (humpback whale, *Megaptera novaeangliae*) and its habitat in designated Sanctuary waters. During the HIHWNMS scoping process, public comments ranged broadly in their recommendations for the future mission of the Sanctuary's ecosystem protection.

Presently, the HIHWNMS is the only single-species Sanctuary in the US. However, Hawai'i is home to a variety of marine life in addition to humpback whales. Both the Sanctuary and traditional Hawaiian culture recognizes the importance and inter-dependence of all living things in an ecosystem. This working group will a) consider the range of alternatives to a single-species humpback whale sanctuary; b) examine how other Federal, State, and local organizations are currently involved in the protections of the Hawaiian marine ecosystem; c) investigate what, if any role, the Sanctuary could play in protections of the ecosystem beyond humpback whales; d) evaluate the implications of changes to the current mission of the HIHWNMS with regard to ecosystem protections; e) create a final report to the Sanctuary with its recommendations for the future mission of the HIHWNMS with regard to ecosystem protection.

Method of Communication within the Working Group:

The preferred method is face to face meetings whenever possible. But given budgetary constraints and the cost of travel between the islands, most communications will likely be accomplished through email and conference calls. However, during calls members on each island will be encouraged to gather in one location (e.g. the Sanctuary island office), in order to allow for some face to face deliberations. This group may also use other technologies (e.g. go to meeting...etc.) to communicate.